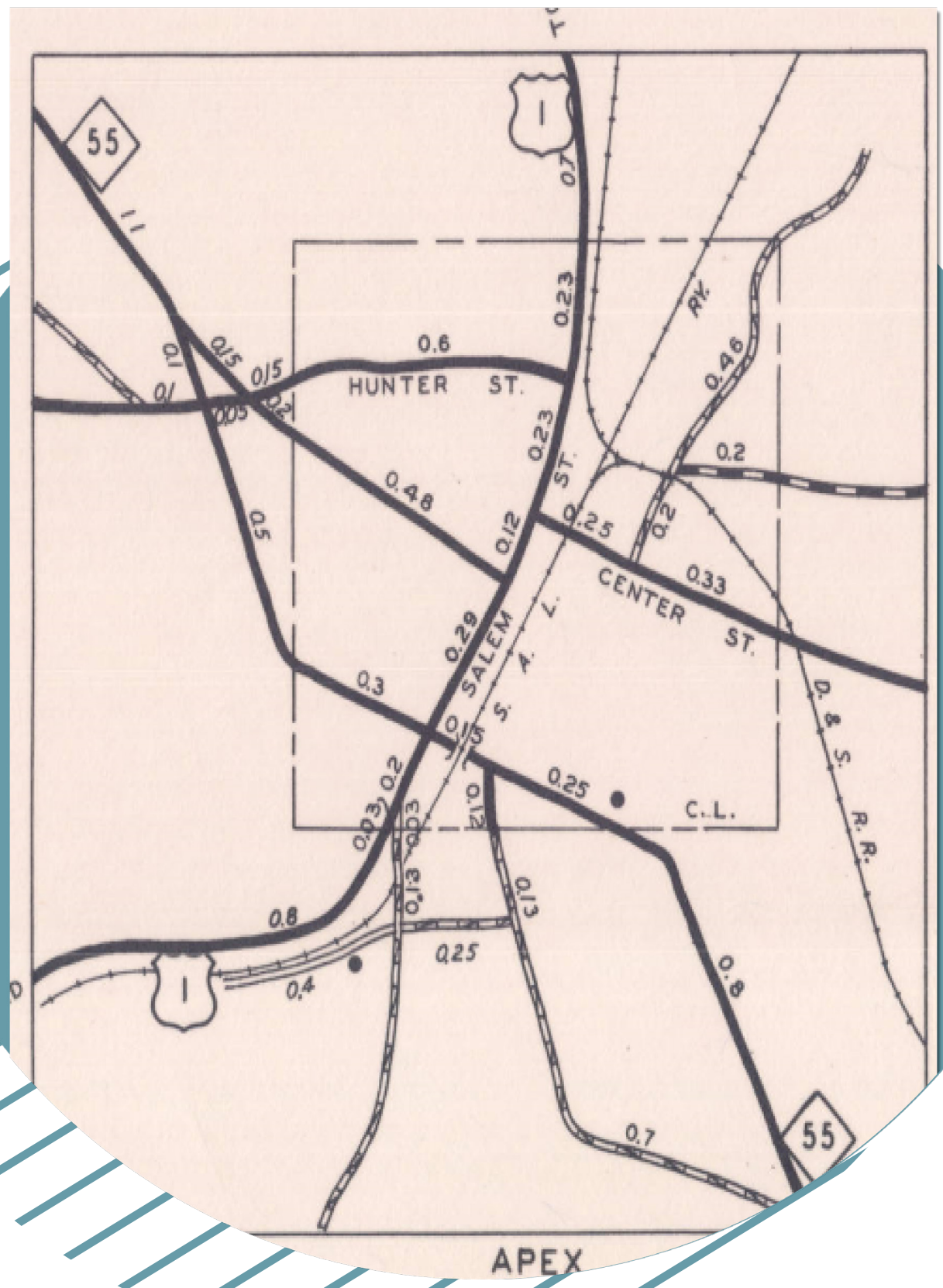


# Town of Apex Downtown History

*Downtown Apex, often regarded as the crown jewel of town, is the area of Salem Street from Hunter Street to Highway 55. The area is home to unique restaurants, shops, and professional services. It stands today with many century-old buildings telling our small-town character story.*



## THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DOWNTOWN

In 1871, Daniel Mann established a general store and, in October, was approved for the store to become a Post Office franchise. After Apex's incorporation in 1873, Mayor Henry Calvin Olive built a new home for his family at 103 South Salem Street, which still stands today.

## DOWNTOWN AS A SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CENTER

Apex began as a one square mile town, with the downtown area as the social and economic center. Community members came downtown not only for groceries, clothing and farming needs, but also to socialize. One resident took it a step further by building her home, located at 316 North Salem Street, to face the downtown area rather than facing the road. Mrs. White, daughter of the Shepherd's Vineyard plantation owner, Reverend Patrick Dowd, loved people-watching in downtown from the view of her front porch.



## ORIGINAL BUILDINGS ARE CONSTRUCTED

From 1901 to 1910 much of the downtown area was transformed into a commercial hub, with buildings lining the streets for the booming tobacco markets. In 1908, the first brick commercial building was constructed and was the key architectural influence for every structure that followed during the economic boom in the early 1900s. 1910 brought the construction of many homes near North Salem Street from Center Street to Hunter Street; many are still standing today.

## FIRE DESTROYS ORIGINAL DOWNTOWN STRUCTURES

In February 1905, a large fire destroyed a large section of downtown that had wood-framed buildings. A fire in the summer of 1911, known as the Great Fire, destroyed most of the downtown. The Great Fire changed the thinking about materials used for construction, and resulted in all buildings being rebuilt in brick. Today, downtown Apex remains one of the few "intact" downtowns with buildings dating back to the early 1900s.



## DOWNTOWN APEX APPROVED AS NATIONAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

In 1994, 83 properties, on approximately 48 acres in downtown Apex, were designated as a National Register Historic District. The district was expanded in 1995, 2002, and 2008 to incorporate the area now recognized as the historic district and includes buildings and structures on 172 properties. The downtown and surrounding neighborhood is considered one of the best examples of an intact turn-of-the-century railroad town in North Carolina. Any changes to existing structures or new construction in the area receives extensive review, ensuring that downtown Apex retains its historic character.

## REVITALIZATION OF DOWNTOWN

In the late 1900s, downtown Apex had succumbed to a significant economic hardship, and many businesses closed their doors and boarded their windows. In an effort to revitalize downtown, Town leadership began a beatification process in 1996. This project included burying power lines and installing antique-style streetlights along the core area of North Salem Street.



## PLANNING FOR DOWNTOWN APEX'S FUTURE

In 2019, Apex Town Council unanimously voted to adopt a Downtown Master Plan & Parking Study. The plan was the result of extensive public input and dedicated work by an engaged steering committee, and is intended to be the primary vision-setting and policy-directing strategy to lead the ongoing revitalization of downtown for the next 20 years.

